

Charge to the Panel

In January 1985, NLM's Board of Regents undertook to develop a Long Range Plan to guide the Library in using its human, physical, and financial resources to fulfill its mission. Some 130 distinguished librarians, information scientists, physicians, nurses, biomedical researchers, computer scientists, and others took part. The Long Range Plan was adopted and published by the Board of Regents in 1987, and its recommendations are being implemented by NLM as resources permit.

The Board of Regents has since directed that the Plan be updated in selected areas, focusing on newly emerging areas and reconsidering some topics not completely specified in the original Plan. Two subsequent reports have been issued by the Board: Improving Health Professionals' Access to Information (the so-called "Outreach Report"), and Electronic Imaging. At its meeting in September 1990, the Board recommended that a planning effort for NLM's Toxicology Information Program be

instituted. Consequently a panel of experts was established.

The Panel was asked by the Board to address issues such as the near- and long-term needs of various user communities for information about toxicology and environmental health; the commonalities and differences for such groups as health care providers, legislators, regulators, scientists, and the public; the adequacy of existing information resources for present and foreseeable future information needs of these groups; the appropriate focus of NLM's efforts in this area; how NLM might improve access to its information services; and what new opportunities should be addressed by NLM, including opportunities stemming from new scientific discoveries, opportunities that are technology driven, opportunities resulting from the emergence of new classes of users, and opportunities that call for new collaborations with government agencies or other organizations.